MANAGING AND PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO HOST 20TH ANNUAL PLEA CONFERENCE

The atmosphere and the people of Albuquerque were perfect, especially our host at the 20th annual Park Law Enforcement Association Conference, the Open Space Division of Parks and General Services, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Park Rangers gave interesting and educational sessions on protecting our natural resources. Protecting Archeological Sites and their artifact were the main items of discussion throughout the conference. The conference attendees, who numbered over a hundred, were fortunate to have a first hand view of some ancient and very valuable archeological sites. Guided by the US Park Service and Albuquerque Park Rangers, attendees were taken to a mesa, called “Sky City,” the oldest continuously inhabited pueblo in the United States, and to an interpretive tour of El Malpia National Monument.

Mathew Schmader, PhD., of Albuquerque, addresses conference attendees on preserving archaeological artifacts.
Continued from front page

Classroom sessions dealt with our jobs as park law enforcement trying to protect such items and how to prevent our users from destroying valuable links to our past. Patrolling techniques to monitoring systems were topics throughout the sessions. For entertainment and for dinner one evening, attendees were taken to Los Amigos Roundup, and served an excellent meal. During the dinner a Mariachis Band played, while Spanish and Indian Dance groups performed afterwards. Also, attendees toured historic, “Albuquerque Old Town,” and a number of shops and dining establishments.

During the conference, a number of issues were discussed during the Board of Directors Meeting. Membership dues will remain the same, and an associate membership will now be offered to those wishing to get in the field of park law enforcement, but do not work in the field. The associate membership has already attracted a number of students, and people who want to show their support for what we do. A scholarship program was recommended by President, Chief Ranger Steve Pokrywka, of Wyandotte County / Kansas City, Kansas Park Rangers, for these students, and was passed by the board. The Scholarship Award will be named after the late, Commander Newell Rand, who served with the Maryland National Capital Park Police and as PLEA's Vice-President when he passed two years ago.

The success of this conference was due mainly because of the hard work of Chief Ranger Steve Thomas, of Albuquerque. Steve and his staff, are to be commended for all the extra hard work, the professionalism, and commitment, that it took to pull off such an ordeal. The conference was a huge success, and they seem to keep getting better and better. Thank you Albuquerque for your hospitality and a job well done!
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Dogs Days of summer are here. In the Midwest it is brutal this time of year, so we do what we can to stay cool. I hope that everyone has had an entertaining summer, and hopefully uneventful. After the Fourth of July, we kind of start hoping it would snow about now. Not just for the relief from the heat, but to slow things down a bit. Don’t take me wrong though, I love to see our parks full, but as I would assume, most of you are in the same shoes. We need a break somewhere in between these summer months just to catch up on the paperwork. Maybe our members of the Great North can bounce a few cold fronts our way ... but just dreaming.

As I reflect on the positives this past spring, and try to stay focused this summer, the acts of violence in our schools and communities are happening at an alarming pace. It is astonishing and our parks have been put in jeopardy. This violence that we used to see on television is now on the doorsteps. These types of crimes and senseless acts didn’t use to take place in our neighborhoods, especially in our parks. Now, from the school grounds to our park playgrounds, we have petty crimes taking place everywhere. Rangers and Park Police are being caught off guard, and in this past year I can recall several incidents involving Park Law Enforcement personnel that turned into brutal acts by criminals.

Who are we to blame? The media, their parents, movies, I am sure you would agree on a few of these and more. Is this what we signed up for when we started this career? I think someone told me when I first started, that this job was more public relations, than law enforcement. The run in with the local drunk or the vandalism at one of our shelters, were few and far between, and now it seems as if we are doing more and more arrests. Getting ourselves in some very dangerous situations seems as the norm from now on. I see some of our troops being very lackadaisical and non-chalet when dealing with the public. Think of this past year’s media events as an awakening.

What can we do to change things? Maybe we cannot do too much, but realistically I cannot see things getting any better. There are some great interpretive programs for our youth that have really effected some communities. If you are like most though, we are under paid and under staffed. The personnel and money it would take to do something positive in the community doesn’t weigh out. We don’t even need to talk about political and administrative roadblocks along the way.

We have to take it upon ourselves to be better prepared. Don’t be paranoid, but be cautious, and practice officer safety. Now is the time to prepare your training curriculum for the next year. Make sure your sessions are realistic, because our jobs are getting more dangerous than ever before. Don’t let your guards down, wear those ballistic vest, take a class in verbal judo, practice weapon retention, make car stop scenarios a must for training, and above all, train for the worst, so that you are not caught off guard. Do not become a statistic.

Be safe and extra cautious, and for public relations sake, smile!
WHY A BOAT PATROL?

by Ranger Sgt. William Troxel
Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, Kansas Parks

Regardless of what part of the country your parks are in, and whether they are in an urban or rural area, chances are very strong that you have some type of water in them. You may be responsible for patrolling an area such as a stream way or as large as a coastal shoreline. Where there is water, you will find a never-ending array of different types of water recreation. Water based recreation brings many challenges and opportunities to those who are responsible for protecting them. The best answer to these challenges and the greatest way to capitalize on the opportunities is to have an active water patrol.

As diverse as the water areas are that we have to patrol, so are the means at our disposal to patrol them. Boat manufactures produce a larger variety of types and sizes of vessels then ever before. Many boat companies offer models designed especially for law enforcement use, and some will custom build a boat to meet your specifications. A recent trend in water patrol is using personal watercrafts (PWC). PWC's has become very popular due to their accessibility and maneuverability. They are propelled by a jet pump, which does not have an exposed propeller. This makes each PWC safer than other vessels for most water rescues.

Although the job of Water Patrol Officers looks like fun, the duties are both challenging and dangerous. Water Patrol Officers must have specialized skills and extensive training. They must be able to operate and maintain different types of watercrafts proficiently. Each officer must be able to perform water rescues and possess some good common sense traits. Knowing CPR and advanced first-aid skills are very vital in their profession. These officers must know the laws and regulations pertaining to water vessels of all sizes and shapes, while trying to figure out a game plan to effectively enforce them. The job requires strong skills in officer safety, communication, and public relation. Officers may also be asked to assist other divisions with tasks such as helping the maintenance division during water front repairs, or the fisheries biologists during surveys. Many states now are recognizing the importance of boating education and offer safe boating classes that are often taught by water patrol officers.

Another benefit of a boat patrol is being able to enforce certain laws on both water and land. Boating operators under the influence of drugs or alcohol are a serious safety problem on our waters. A boat patrol can reduce the number of these intoxicated operators by just our presence on the water, or by making Boating Under the Influence arrest. A boating officer can also see things on land that an officer patrolling form a vehicle may miss. They can observe remote areas from the water and have the element of surprise since most offenders do not expect law enforcement from the water. Fish and wildlife violations, along with environmental protection, can easily be detected from the water. Polluting waters, creel limits, license checks, and tagging are just a few things your boat patrol can provide.

If you are interested in learning more about your states boating laws or in offering a safe boating class, you can contact your states Boating Law Administrator.
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Make sure you stay current with your Annual Membership
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Board of Directors 1999

PLEA OFFICERS

Steve Pokrywka, President
Chief Ranger
Wyandotte County/KC, KS Park Rangers
3488 West Drive
Kansas City, KS 66109
(913) 299-3121
Fax (913) 299-9051

Norm Lapera, Vice-President
Chief of Public Safety
East Bay Regional Park District
17930 Lake Chabot Road
Castro Valley, CA 94546
(510) 881-1833 ext. 3005
Fax (510) 538-7743

Stuart Foland, Secretary/Treasurer
Police Captain
Johnson County Park Police
Ranger Headquarters
7900 Renner Road
Shawnee Mission, KS 66219
(913) 438-7275
Fax (913) 438-8074

Larry Brownlee, Secretary
Commander
Maryland National Capital Park Police
6700 Riverdale Road
Riverdale, MO 20737
(301) 429-5620
Fax (301) 577-2498

BILL CURTIN, PAST-PRESIDENT
Chief of Ranger Police
Forest Preserve District of DuPage County
P.O. Box 2339 (185 Spring)
Glen Ellyn, IL 60138
(630) 933-7239
Fax (630) 983-7241

Bill Jacobs
Captain
Minneapolis Park Police
3800 Bryant Ave.,
Minneapolis, MN 55409
(612) 370-4777
Fax (612) 370-4831

Richard Greer, Past-President
Chief Ranger
Hamilton County Park District
10245 Winton Road
Cincinnati, OH 45231
(513) 521-3980
Fax (513) 521-2606

Stephen W. Thomas
Chief Ranger
City of Albuquerque
Open Space Division
P.O. Box 1293
Albuquerque, NM 87103
(505) 873-6620 pager-(505) 766-0842
(505) 873-6628

Ralph Hays, Past-President
Chief Ranger
Johnson County Park Police
7900 Renner road
Shawnee Mission, KS 66219
(913) 438-8075
Fax (913) 438-8074

Dr. Bruce Wicks, Educational Advisor
Associate Professor
University of Illinois
Department of Leisure Studies
104 Huff Hall
1206 South Fourth Street
Champaign, IL 61820
(217) 333-4410
Fax (217) 244-1935

Jerry Wimpee, Past-President
Retired
Route 2, Box 39-2
Rockwall, TX 75087
(972) 771-5581

R. Daniel Crone
Park Ranger
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Saylorville Lake
5600 N.W. 78th Avenue
Johnston, IA 50131
(515) 276-4656

John Byrd, Jr.
Sergeant
Park Ranger Division
Durham Police Department
505 W. Chapel Hill Street
Durham, NC 27701
Office: (919) 560-4317
Fax (919) 517-4787
Pager (919) 683-6366

Dale Reatherford
Sergeant
Hamilton County Park
10245 Winton Road
Cincinnati, OH 45231
(513) 474-3004
Fax (513) 521-2606

STATE AFFILIATES WILL BE LISTED
IN THE FALL NEWSLETTER
WEB SITE UPDATE:

www.parkranger.com

As you read this, we should be well under way with a major revision of the web site. The site has been a tremendous instrument for acquiring new members, and it has a lively threaded discussion board and we have a tremendous volume of e-mails and a huge number of hits on the site.

You should see some of the new features of the site popping up anytime now, if not there already. We are going for a lot more interactivity, more information, and better perks for P.L.E.A. members. Perks like discounts on all kinds of PLEA merchandise, and restricted access to a job board. We are also going to start posting the newsletter online.

We also have just got some great e-mail from Mark Reeder with the Kentucky State Parks who suggested doing a monthly piece featuring a division or agency, and he is even going to do the first one for us! You can be the agency or division of the month if you send in your article! Only one featured per month, first come, first in!

So hopefully, you can turn on your computer now, and see how far we have advanced on this mission. We need YOUR input, so let us know if you have any good ideas and we welcome your articles and pictures for the website or the newsletter. If you are a budding author, and would like to submit information and/or photos about your agency, division, or favorite aspect of park law enforcement it will be well received.

UPCOMING EVENTS

N.R.P.A. CONFERENCE
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Watch for your Registration Information later this year!

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